CONFERENCE connection
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SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

May 16, 2022

A Prayer for Times Such as These

by Rev. Kim Wood

Sometimes, there are so many injustices to which God calls us to action, it is impossible to give them the attention they all require in one short conversation. In times such as these, I find it best to pray. I invite you, instead of reading an article today, to take a couple of deep, cleansing breaths and join me in prayer…

Holy God, the world seems to be spinning faster than its daily rotation, picking up speed at an alarming rate toward disregard, hatred, and injustice. The barrage feels endless, and the suffering caused by both blatant attacks and veiled agendas is unacceptable. Laws outlawing gender-affirming care for transgender children and youth; attacks on women's rights to control their own bodies; actions minimizing the ability to vote and voter impact of persons of color; mass shootings and hate crimes that lay bare the realities of gun violence, racism, and mental health resources; our irresponsibility in caring for the environment; wars in Ukraine, Ethiopia, Yemen, and so many other regions; refugees seeking shelter amidst bombings and battle and at the hands of ruthless political, military, and financial regimes; discrimination in the provision of healthcare; hunger and lack of safe shelter; immigrant detention; death by suicide; the ever-present Covid-19 virus…O God, the list is off the rails. Where do we begin? How do we continue? What do we do?

And yet, God, we know there is hope because you have shown us so in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus. Your Holy Spirit continues to

sustain and guide us, even when we stumble and fall. There are glimmers of your life-giving love that shine a way forward: injunctions on laws that make life-giving medical treatment for trans children and youth illegal; proactive searches for ways forward to protect the self-determination of women; continued exploration to end gun violence and address racism and racially-motivated hate crimes; children with full bellies before and safe places to sleep, just to name a few. Thank you, God, for these glimmers.

God of Mercy and Strength, the world seems daunting right now. But you've seen this before, and you have never abandoned us. Help us to trust you completely and to act courageously and compassionately. Embolden us to speak truth to power and to step up and step out with unabashed determination. Use us as instruments of your insistent and victorious love. We pray to you with hearts and minds listening to your still-speaking voice in Christ's Holy name. Amen.

News from the Conference Office

2022 Annual Meeting is June 24-25 in Montgomery

Register now for the Southeast Conference Annual Meeting.

Some exciting parts of this year's Annual Meeting you do not want to miss:

- Youth Programing
- Rev. Traci Blackmon will be with us
- Opportunities to learn more about Montgomery
- Great Worship
- Opportunity to connect with others around the Conference
- Zoom opportunities to connect if Montgomery is a little too far away

New this year- Child Care will be offered for the first time. The whole family is welcome and make new friends

We hope you can join us in Montgomery, June 24th-25th, 2022! Register Today!!!

To Register to participate -please go here: https://cvent.me/xvyQ33.

Registration for the whole weekend is $110 or $50 for Youth. You can register to participate for only one day as well.

Ordination of Jess Cusick

The Commission on Ministry and Kirkwood United Church of Christ invite you to the Ordination of Jess Cusick on Sunday, May 22, 2022, at 5 pm at Kirkwood UCC in Atlanta. You are invited to participate by joining us onsite or on Zoom. Jess is a Member in Discernment from Kirkwood United Church of Christ. She is a 2018 graduate of Candler School of Theology and currently serves as the Minister of Youth and Young Adults at Saint Mark United Methodist Church in Atlanta, GA.

Clergy Zoom Connections for May

- **An Hour of Conversations and Prayer**
  Tuesday, 17, 24, 31 - 11:00 a.m. Eastern (10:00 a.m. Central); Zoom: https://zoom.us/j/479440102
- **Live Harp Meditations for Ministers**
  Thursday, May 19 - 1:00 p.m. Eastern (12:00 noon Central)
  20 minutes of meditation with Celtic harp. Silent prayer and reflection following if desired, facilitated by Rev. Jean Norton.
  Zoom: https://zoom.us/j/96976838422
- **Especially for Specialized Ministers**
  Tuesday, May 24 - 9:30 a.m. Eastern (8:30 a.m. Central)
  Zoom: https://zoom.us/j/354744689

Prayer List

We are continuing the process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2022. We encourage you to include these prayer requests in your local church newsletter, share them with your prayer circle, and include them in your own prayers.

Week of May 15

- Circular Congregational UCC; Charleston, South Carolina
- George Bennett
- Matt Frierdich
- James Norris
- J. Richard Woodward

Week of May 22

- First Congregational Christian UCC; Montgomery Alabama
- Clara Benson
- Diane Tugel
- Stephanie Crumpton
- Nancy E. Dietsch

Week of May 29

- Real Inspiration Ministries; Decatur, Georgia
- Christy Bonner
- Andrew Frierson Jr
- Dorothy Gager

Churches in Transition

First Congregational, Montgomery AL; First Congregational, Savannah GA; Trinity Congregational, Athens AL; Holy Trinity Community Church, Nashville TN; First United Church, Belvidere TN; Pleasant Hill Community Church, Pleasant Hill TN; Peace Congregational, Clemson SC; Deer Lodge Congregational Church, Deer Lodge TN; Brookemeade Congregational, Nashville TN

News from our Local Congregations

UGA Students Visit Montgomery, AL

My name is Rev. Haley Lerner, and I have the honor of serving as campus minister at the Presbyterian Student Center in Athens, GA. The weekend of Palm Sunday, I traveled with a group of students from the PSC to Montgomery, AL for our annual Spring Pilgrimage. Our Spring Pilgrimage is a unique take on a retreat that allows us to grow and connect together while also engaging our faith at the important intersection of truth and justice. And Montgomery gave us the incredible opportunity to think critically about the history and current reality of racism in America and our/the church's complicitness in it. We spent the day Saturday at the EJI Legacy Museum and at the National Memorial for Peace and Justice and spent time reflecting on what we were learning and witnessing in these spaces.

We reflected, too, on the fact that this was the first time our group had been able to travel together or go on any retreat together since January of 2020. So what a blessing it was to get to spend time together as a community in this way.

Read the rest on our website...

News from the Wider Church

UCC members invited to listening sessions to shape

profile for next General Minister and President

You are invited to participate in one of several upcoming listening sessions for the General Minister and President (GMP) search process. The purpose of these sessions is for the National Setting to hear your sense of where the United Church of Christ is right now, and how you understand the challenges and opportunities our next general minister and president will face. The listening sessions will be facilitated by members of the Isaacson Miller team, and members of the search committee will be listening. What we hear from you will shape the position profile, which is the document that will officially invite prospective candidates to apply.

- Town Hall for Youth and Young Adults – Monday, May 23, 7 p.m. EST – Register here.
- Town Hall for People of Color – Wednesday, May 25, 7 p.m. EST – Register here.
- Open Town Hall #2 – Thursday, May 26, 5:30 p.m. PST (8:30 EST) – Register here.

A low-cost loan from the Cornerstone Fund is just a click away!

Is your congregation considering making improvements on your building to expand ministry or increase revenue? Is it finally addressing deferred maintenance items that worsen every year? Are you ready to reduce your building's carbon footprint and save money on utilities in the process? Can you enhance digital capabilities to maintain and grow your online

community?

If any of these questions apply to you, then now is a good time to talk with the Cornerstone Fund about low-cost loan options that will directly improve your facility and potentially strengthen your congregation.

Maria Coyne, President & CEO of Cornerstone Fund, explains how her organization can help. “The United Church of Christ Cornerstone Fund helps local churches and non-profit organizations improve their facilities and create change within their communities. We do this by offering a variety of transformative lending products and investment options that not only empower these communities but also help clients earn more on their investment.”

Congregations and UCC-affiliated organizations across the country have taken advantage of Cornerstone Fund offerings. Regardless of your church or organization's needs, the United Church of Christ Cornerstone Fund may be able to assist. Visit www.CornerstoneFund.org to learn more or contact a lending specialist at 888-UCC-FUND (822-3863) or lending@cornerstonefund.org.

Trainings and Conferences

Cyber Risk and Exposures: Is Your Ministry Next?

Join the Insurance Board on **Thursday, May 26th at 2 PM EST** as Richard Bortnick, J.D. shares the impacts of cyber risks and exposures that your ministry could face. Learn about State, Federal, and International compliance regulations, as well as prominent hacking vectors and schemes. Protect your ministry by learning best practices, and tips from the expertise of our guest speaker. Register For This Webcast

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2022 Southern Region Women's Retreat

"God of Mystery – Spirit of Hope" is the theme of this year's retreat, held October 14 – 16, 2022 at Camp Weed & Cerveny Conference Center in Live Oak, Florida.

The retreat will be held in a beautiful northern Florida setting on a small lake, the same location where we met in 2013. It has a lovely chapel looking out on the water, nice two-bed rooms with private baths, an inspiring outdoor patio area with rocking chairs overlooking the lake, a large dining room with great food, and trails through the woods. A perfect spot to retreat from our everyday lives.

If you value camaraderie, making new friends and reconnecting with old ones, learning new skills, and listening to God in a natural setting you will want to join us for the weekend. More details at uccfla.org/floridauccwomen.

Marcia McFee Worship Planning Retreat

For years, Marcia McFee and Jason Moore have heard people say how much their teaching principles about creativity and worship design are simpatico! So together they are re-shaping the annual Worship Design Studio Planning Retreat so that it will not only be double the creative ideas for the 2022-2023 liturgical year, but also focus on meaningful ways we can re-shape our in-person, online, and rhythm-flexible worshiping!

Utilizing material from Moore's hot-off-the-press new book, *Both/And: Maximizing Hybrid Worship Experiences for In-Person and Online Engagement* and McFee's *Think Like a Filmmaker: Sensory-Rich Worship Design for Unforgettable Messages*, participants will learn concrete ideas and techniques for bringing the Word alive throughout the year in their places of worship in multiple formats to reach people where they are–live, online, in scheduled worship, and outside of typical worship formats. All while doing long-range planning that will create excitement for the coming year. Learn more on their website.

Conference Calendar

May 17 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EDT
Clergy Conversations via Zoom

May 19 @ 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm EDT
Live Harp Meditations for Ministers

May 19 @ 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm EDT
Commission on Ministry Meeting

May 22 @ 5:00 pm - 6:00 pm EDT
Ordination of Haley Lerner

May 24 @ 9:30 am - 11:00 am EDT
Zoom Conversation for Specialized Ministers

May 24 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EDT
Clergy Conversations via Zoom

May 31 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EDT
Clergy Conversations via Zoom

June 24 - June 25
SEC UCC 56th Annual Meeting

View the **full calendar** of events online: https://www.secucc.org/events/

Contact Us

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